Unemployment due to new catering policy

†1734. SHRIMATI SAVITA SHARDA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that due to the new catering policy of the Railways there is a danger of hundreds of people being rendered unemployed who are running small catering units at railway stations; and

(b) if so, whether Government would also think about hundreds of people who are running small catering units while preparing new catering policy so that they do not face the danger of becoming unemployed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (b) There is no danger of hundreds of people being rendered unemployed who are running small catering units at railway stations as a result of implementation of New Catering Policy—2004 *w.e.f.* 12.10.2004. All the licencees whose present contracts have expired or are due to expire will be able to participate in the new tenders/selection through application against the existing and fresh licences, subject to eligibility criteria. Employment opportunities will not decrease as catering units are not being closed.

Disadvantageous railway lines

†1735. SHRIMATI KUM KUM RAI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of such non-viable railway branch lines in the country;

(b) the details thereof; State-wise; and

(c) the action to be taken by Government regarding these railway lines?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) There are 115 uneconomic branch lines in the country.

(b) Such information is maintained Railway Zone-wise only and not State-wise.

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.